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THE CLARKE COURIER.

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HEART THROBS.

Beat—beat; beat—beat,
The heart of a man goes on,
Till a smile on his fight worn face gives forth
The sense of conquest won,
But the music of his life is mute,
The song of his speech is done.

Beat—beat; beat—beat,
The heart of a child goes pat,
Now high with hope, now low with fear,
Now wishing for this—then that,
Reckoning little of care to come,
Happy with ball or bat.

Beat with fluttering beat
The heart of a maiden sighs;
Frivolish, girlish, she fain would aid
Some noble high emprise;
Forever and anon she dreams,
Love lighting her tender eyes.

And slow beat the hearts of the old,
Be it of grandsire or dame;
Gone are the cares of mid-age,
Day unto day is the same;
Living again in the lives of the young,
Happy in youth's glad flame.

And the heart of the world goes throb,
Strong, resistless, great,
Filled with passion or right or wrong,
Love and work and hate.
Short is the time for love,
But all too long for woe,
As beat—beat, beat—beat,
Life's heart throbs come and go.

—C. P. Paine in London Queen.

The Mysterious Master.

By William Le Queux.

I really ought not to relate this story, I suppose, because the person it chiefly concerns is still living and is one of the best known men in Europe, but as biographers have a habit of betraying confidences I think that in this matter I may be forgiven if I anticipate them.

I was poor, my clothes were threadbare, and my stomach was often painfully empty.

While busy copying Durer's "Adoration of the Magi" in the Uffizi in an attempt to grasp its marvelous technical handling and fluency of coloring three bright faced English girls, probably tourists, entered the Tribuna. One of them passed behind me to examine my work, then, probably taking me for an Italian because of my pegtop trousers and soft hat, exclaimed quite audibly in English to one of her companions:

"Look, dear! What a frightful daub! The poor fellow is a student, I suppose. But he'll never make an artist, that's certain."

An hour later I was sitting in the attic, high up above the noisy Via Condotti, which served me as a studio and living room, plunged in black despair.

The door opened, and there advanced timidly into the room a strange, ill dressed, white haired old man, who, removing his shabby hat, greeted me affably in Italian. His face was thin and wizened, his figure lean and shriveled, but his eyes were black and full of a fire that age had not dimmed. Accompanying him was a young girl of perhaps 18 of that rare type the fair haired Florentine.

"I trust you will pardon my intrusion," croaked the queer old fellow in a thin, squeaky voice. "I noticed you copying in the Tribuna today, and it afterward occurred to me that you might have some pictures for sale. When I returned, however, you had gone. Therefore I ascertained your address and came here. Have I your pardon?"

"Ah," he added, "you have something there, I see!"

"It is a failure," I admitted sadly.

He raised his eyes to mine with an inquiring glance and then proceeded to criticise my work in a manner which showed him to be no tyro in art.

The young girl with the blue eyes sat gazing at the picture, but uttering no word. I fancied, however, that she sighed.

"You see my work. I have no talent," I added despondently, when in answer to his inquiries I told him my story.

"You mistake," he answered kindly. "You have some talent, but you lack the dexterity which makes an artist. That picture there, for instance," and he pointed to the easel, "might be turned into a very creditable piece of work with but little effort. If you'll allow me, I'll give you an illustration of what I mean."

To this I made no objection, and a few moments later he was at work with brush and palette painting away with astounding rapidity, while I stood by wondering as the picture grew beneath his hand. By the addition of subtle touches here and there he was completely transforming the work, showing the tinted and throbbing flesh against the warm light ground with a technical execution that bewildered me. I had never seen a man paint like that before.

"Ah," I exclaimed at last in profound admiration, "the signore is a painter!"

"I have painted," he answered enigmatically, and his lips closed as though he wished to say nothing of himself. "I do not buy my own poor work. But you are in need," he said. "Tomorrow take it to Ferroni in the Via Calzaioli."

"To Ferroni!" I exclaimed. "But he is the greatest and most critical of all the dealers. Surely he will not care for my work?"

"Take it to him and see."

I stood before the easel in the soft, red light of the Italian afterglow and marveled at the transformation that had been effected.

Next day, with the canvas under my arm, I entered Ferroni's, not, I must confess, without some trepidation.

When the dealer saw it, he grunted:

"The old man has done this! It isn't your own work," he said bluntly, looking at me. "The mysterious master has been at work again. How did he discover you?"

I explained the whole of the circumstances.

"Ah, you are lucky indeed!" he responded. "This is not the first picture of his that I have had, yet I would know his work amid 10,000 canvases."

"But who is he?" I inquired anxiously. "He refused to tell me his name."

"Nobody knows," responded the dealer.

"He is a master," I declared, admiring the picture.

"Undoubtedly. Such technic is possessed by no other living painter. It is because of that I am able to offer you 1,000 lire for the picture."

A thousand lire! I stood open mouthed.

"It was more than you expected, eh?" he rejoined, with a laugh.

Weeks passed, however, until one morning while I was busy he entered accompanied by Filomena. He seemed rather more feeble, and a single glance at the girl, whose sweet face, with the clear blue eyes, was such an exact replica of that exquisite little Madonna of Vandyke in the Pitti palace, showed that she had sadly changed. Her cheeks had lost their roundness, her face was pale, and she was evidently ill.

I sympathized with her, and we fell to talking quite naturally. She was ingenuous, frank and altogether charming.

I told the signore how I had sold the picture to Ferroni, at which he smiled and then proceeded to quiz and criticise my new work, pointing out a defect in foreshortening that I had not before noticed and indicating the errors with his thin, bony hand.

"But you are improving rapidly—piano, si lavore bene," he said encouragingly and after giving some technical instruction added, "And now let me see what I can make of it."

He threw aside his shabby coat, took up my palette, mixed some colors with great care and then in silence went to work.

Thus I stood chatting with Filomena. We chatted about the galleries and the antiquities, and I could not refrain from saying:

"Firenze non si muove, se tutta non si duole."

"Ah," she laughed, "that is quite true! Its charm lies in the fact that the vandals have not touched it like so many of our old cities. And you find it pleasant too?"

"I have but little time to see its beauties," I answered. "I work always. Work, work, but with such little result—ah, so very little!"

The old man finished at last and threw down the brushes, saying:

"I think now it will do. Take it to that old rogue Ferroni and make him give you 2,000 lire for it. It is worth that, but the old Jew always lies like an epitaph."

I stood before the easel dumfounded. The effect was perfect. He was indeed the mysterious master. I thanked him, but he waved me aside, declaring it was nothing.

As the old man had suggested, Ferroni gave me 2,000 lire for the picture, and a day or two afterward, having entered Santa Maria Novella with a view to painting the Strozzi chapel as a background, I suddenly encountered Filomena. She was going up to Fiesole to deliver a message for the signore, and, obtaining permission, I accompanied her. How well I remember that sunny afternoon as we strolled about the ancient little town perched high upon its hill, where the women were plaiting their straws; how we gazed down upon the Duomo and the red roofs of Florence, with the Arno winding away like a silver thread to sun blanched old Pisa and the distant sea! I became intoxicated by her marvelous beauty, for her face was pure as one of Donatello's angels.

Beneath the shadow of the grim old Porta San Gallo she halted to take leave of me, and I saw in her manner a firm determination to give me no opportunity of finding out where she lived. Somehow I could not open my mouth even to stammer a word of love, although my heart was full of it.

"Addio," she said, stretching forth her slim, white hand.

"Addio, si dice ai morti" (adieu one says only to the dead), I protested, taking her hand.

"Then a rivederle," she said, raising her eyes to mine with a strange, sad look and, turning, continued her way beneath the trees of the Viale.

Time wore on until the festa of Natale. On the day following the fete I chanced to be crossing the Piazzi Signoria, that great old square flanked by the Palazzo Vecchio and Orcagna's dark old loggia, with its wonderful bronzes and statuary, when suddenly a fine carriage drawn by a grand pair of bays passed me. In it, sitting alone, was a slight female figure warmly wrapped in rich furs. I glanced quickly after her. No. Surely it could not be Filomena! I laughed bitterly at the suggestion, then, sighing wearily, continued my way.

One night while I sat reading by candlelight my door was opened suddenly, and a man in smart livery stood in the entry.

"The Signor George Maguire?" he inquired.

I rose quickly and took from his hand a letter, which I found to contain an urgent request in Italian that I should accompany the bearer, as the writer wished to see me immediately. It was signed "Il Maestro Misterioso."

So he knew the title that old Ferroni had given him! The letter was a surprise, but I assumed my frayed overcoat and lost no time in obeying. Below a brougham awaited me, and, entering it, I was driven across the city and out by the Porta Romana to one of those beautiful villas with which the hills around Florence are studded. A manservant threw open the door, and, entering, I found myself in a spacious hall filled with palms and flowers, a veritable winter garden.

Suddenly the servant opened a door, and I found myself with the man who had rescued me from starvation.

His face was haggard and anxious, his eyes bore signs of recent tears, and as he advanced and took my hand I felt that he was trembling.

"Signore," I cried, "why, what is the meaning of this?"

"Filomena," he sobbed in a choking voice. "She wished to see you, so I have sent for you."

"She is ill? Tell me the truth quickly," I cried.

"Come," he faltered, "see for yourself." And he led me to a handsome bed chamber, where in the subdued light I distinguished two Sisters of Charity in their big white headdresses tenderly watching their patient. Advancing to the bed, I bent until I saw the poor pinched white face with the wealth of fair hair straying over the pillow. Her eyes were closed, and she seemed to be sleeping, but as the old maestro approached she suddenly raised her eyelids, and her gaze, wandering, fell upon me.

At first she seemed unable to recognize me distinctly, but a moment later she put forth her thin, wasted hand, and I took it tenderly, unable to utter a single word—unable to keep back the hot tears which blinded me.

I felt the soft pressure of her fingers and saw that long, wistful look in her pure blue eyes.

"You have come to me at last, Piccino!" she whispered softly in her musical Tuscan. "I have waited so long—so very long, my love, my love!"

I stood there rooted to the spot.

Then I dropped on my knees to kiss her hand; but, alas, it was only a dead hand that my lips caressed. With that declaration of her love, the love that I had feared to tell her on that well remembered day when we went up to Fiesole, she had passed peacefully away.

A couple of days later, the day of the Befana, I turned from the Piazza Donatello into the Viale Amedeo and halted before a large house facing the Gheradesca Gardena, the address of which the mysterious master had given me. The house, I found, was a fine, handsome studio, and upon the door was a small brass plate with the single inscription:

CAV. CORRADINI.

Corradini! I stood aghast before the door. I rang and inquired of the black coated cameriere whether the signor professore was within. In response he led me through the handsome salon, with its long windows—a salon wherein many a reigning sovereign has sat waiting the pleasure of the great master of painting—along a small gallery hung with his works and entered the large, bare and rather uncomfortable studio.

And there I found the sad faced maestro misterioso and discovered the truth. The man who had watched me in the Uffizi and who had transformed my wretched pictures, thus rescuing me from absolute penury, was none other than the great Corradini, whose fame was known the world over and whose wonderful pictures commanded the highest price of those of any living artist.

"You must know the truth," he faltered. "The poor child loved you from the first, but she was struck down by that curse of the human race, consumption. Her thoughts were always of you and of your welfare, and on the day before I sent for you she confided to me her secret. She confessed that she loved you, that she had met you, but that you had not reciprocated her affection. Yet she passed away happily, poor child," he added in tears. "She knew at last that you actually loved her."

And we both sat silent, plunged in unutterable grief. He had lost his only daughter. I had lost my only love.—New York Herald.

Salt.

Spilling salt was held to be an unlucky omen by the Romans, and the superstition has descended to ourselves. Leonard de Vinci availed himself of this tradition in his famous picture of the "Lord's Supper" to indicate Judas Iscariot by the saltcellar knocked over by his arm. Salt was used in the sacrifice by the Greeks and Romans and also by the Jews. It was an emblem of purity and of the sanctifying influence on others of a holy life. Hence our Lord tells his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." The salt being spilt after it was placed on the head of the victim was considered a bad omen, being supposed to signify that the sacrifice was not accepted, and hence the superstition.

When we say of the shiftless fellow that he does not "earn his salt" we unconsciously allude to an ancient custom among the Romans. Among them a man was said to be in possession of a "salary" who had his "salarium," his allowance of salt money, or salt, wherewith to savor the food by which he lived. Thus salary comes from salt, and in view of the word how many there are who do not "earn their salt."

King and Peasant.

A pretty story is told in one of Mr. Ruskin's books, "Christ's Folk In the Apennines," of the late King Humbert's pleasant accessibility.

A contadino had come down to Lucca from somewhere in the mountains with a petition which he wished to present to the king, but when he saw him with his seguito he did not know who he was. Probably the poor man's only idea of a king was gathered from some picture of the adoration of the wise men. So he looked at all of them and rather thought the king was not there, but perhaps one of these gentlemen would convey the paper to him. And being taken with the king's pleasant face he went to him in preference to any of the others and put the paper into his hands, saying: "I will leave it with you, sir. I rather think I have given it into good hands." At which the king smiled and said, "Yes you have."

COUNTERFEITERS' PAY.

Ten Times More Could Be Made by Them In Honest Business.

"Nobody has ever been able to explain the mysterious fascination of counterfeiting," said an old federal official at the custom house. "There is, without a doubt, something about the work, aside from its possible profits, that draws men into it and keeps them there at the sacrifice of almost everything that would appear to make life worth living. 'Once a counterfeiter always a counterfeiter' is an axiom in the secret service, and it is borne out by facts.

"Yet counterfeiting would seem, on the surface, to be one of the least attractive branches of crime. It involves an immense amount of hard work, accompanied, as a rule, by exposure and privation, and there is not one single case on record in which a maker or 'shover' of the 'queer' retired in peace with anything like a competence. Indeed, there are very few known instances in which a counterfeiter ever made as much as $5,000 out of the operation. They are almost invariably caught or driven to cover before they succeed in floating enough of their wares to pay them ordinary day wages for the time they have put in.

The engraving of a bogus treasury note is a long and tedious operation. Even in the government bureau at Washington, where every modern labor saving appliance is at hand and the work is distributed among a dozen skillful operators—one doing the vignette, another the lettering, another the scrolls, and so on—it takes several months to finish a plate. One man doing the whole thing and working under cover in continual dread of discovery, would easily be occupied two or three years at the same task. And you must bear in mind that an engraver competent to turn out a dangerous replica could easily be earning from $8 to $12 a day at honest employment. In other words, he puts all the way from $7,500 to $10,000 worth of work into the undertaking, and when the plate is at last ready for the press he has no assurance whatever that a dozen of the bills will ever actually be passed. The chances are about two to one that the job will land him in prison.

"But in spite of all this," continued the officer, "some of the best engravers in the country have turned out counterfeiters and persisted in it to the bitter end. It is very strange. The same rule applies to all grades of bogus money making. None of it ever pays as a business proposition. Some time ago an Italian was arrested here in New Orleans for manufacturing spurious quarters. He turned out a very cleverly made white metal coin, but had shoved less than $10 worth when he was caught and given a term behind the bars. The fake quarters were first cast in a mold and afterward touched up or 'sharpened,' as it is called technically, by hand. The 'reeding' around the edge was also hand work and very tedious. I calculated that he could finish not over eight coins a day, working hard for at least ten hours. Just think of it! Only $2 a day for highly skilled labor, and even then he didn't reap that amount as net profit. The coins had to be passed, the object, being of course, to secure good money in change. That necessitated making some little purchase with every piece, so at best not more than 20 cents was actually realized on the transaction. In short, the Italian was obliged to put in one day counterfeiting and the best part of another 'shoving,' all for a beggarly $1.60, and meanwhile he was constantly jeopardizing his liberty. He was a man of considerable artistic ability and ought to have been able to have earned $3 or $4 a day as a pattern maker or designer.

"Almost every one of the famous bank note counterfeiters has had opportunities to quit crooked work with full assurance of no future molestation on the part of the authorities. You see, the government is generally only too willing to make terms with such dangerous fellows. But it is no use. Not one of them has ever 'staid straight' six months after alleged reformation. They can't resist the fatal fascination."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

How Kipling Crushed a Bore.

I met a traveler who came from the Cape aboard the steamer on which Rudyard Kipling made the passage, and he had some good stories to tell of the author. Kipling was pestered by a flock of passengers who wished to gush over him and hero worship him.

Kipling, you know, is not built that way and puts up impatiently with gush and hysteria. One forenoon Kipling was walking the deck hand in hand with his little daughter, when one of the gushers, seeing an opportunity to flatter the father and so make friends with the author, threw himself in the way of the couple.

"Oh, Mr. Kipling," he gushed, "is that your child?"

Kipling grunted a noncommittal "Yes" and tried to pass. But the fellow was not done with him. Still standing in the way, he exclaimed:

"What a delightfully beautiful and healthy child she is!"

Kipling gazed a stony gaze at the man, and saying, with great emphasis on the personal pronoun, "I'm reasonably satisfied with her make," he shouldered past the bore and tramped on.—Saturday Evening Post.

Putting on Airs.

Mrs. Jackson—Dat hifalutin Mrs. Washtub am puttin on lots of airs lately; tryin to act jes' like white folks!

Mrs. Johnson—Um! Wot am her latest fad?

Mrs. Jackson—Why, de most redikilous fing yo' evah heerd ob! She am suin her husband fo' nonsuppo'ht!—Puck.